

BLISTERING CAUSED BY OEDEMERID BEETLES

By PATRICIA VAURIE

American Museum of Natural History

This report on experiences with the blisters caused by Oedemerid beetles was suggested by Dr. Ross H. Arnett, Jr., whose revision of the Nearctic Oedemeridae has recently been published (1951, Amer. Midl. Nat., vol. 45, pp. 257-391). He said that blistering had been attributed to the Oedemeridae but that more records of it were needed as well as of other biological data.

From June 8 to August 23, 1951, my husband and I collected insects on the Bimini Islands, Bahamas, where we were the guests of the Lerner Marine Laboratory of the American Museum of Natural History. The laboratory and residence are on North Bimini, but nearly all our collecting was done on South Bimini. Oedemerids of the genera *Oxacis* and *Alloxacis* were common on both islands, being especially abundant during the first part of the summer. In June around the laboratory lights at night and on a large coconut palm trunk near a light, they were clustered so thickly as to hide the surface beneath them. On South Bimini they were found in the daytime on black mangrove blossoms and at night came in great numbers to the collecting sheets. They also swarmed at night over blossoming flowers of the Sabal Palmetto. Being so numerous on the sheets they would inevitably at times get crushed under our hands as we reached for other insects and they also flew into our faces as we knelt over the sheets with our lighted head lamps.

The day after a good collecting night we might have from one to six or seven or more blisters or even no blisters at all. They might appear at breakfast time or later on in the day. They were always a surprise as there was no itching or pain of any kind, merely a round or elongate or irregularly shaped blister, either somewhat flat or much raised, appearing on our faces, necks, forearms, back of the hand, between the fingers, or on the knuckles, sometimes on the upper part of the body. If not broken they remained for four or five days and new skin formed beneath them. Usually, however, they broke in the course of further collecting, leaving the skin exposed and raw, and they might

take weeks to heal completely if on a spot subject to rubbing, salt water, insect repellent, et cetera.

Two other collectors who had preceded us had the same experiences although we were not all affected to the same degree. My husband who apparently was most susceptible, remarked often, after he had inadvertently crushed on Oedemerid, that he would probably get a blister in that place and this, unfortunately for him, almost always turned out to be true. On the other hand I believe that I did not get more than a dozen blisters all summer. In August we both got much fewer blisters, but I do not know whether this was owing to any sort of building up of immunity or to the fact that at that time the Oedemerids grew less numerous.

BOOK NOTICE

LARVAE OF INSECTS, PART II, (COLEOPTERA, DIPTERA, NEUROPTERA, SIPHONAPTERA, MECOPTERA, TRICHOPTERA), by Alvah Peterson, 1951, 416 pages, fully illustrated. [Published by the author, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.]

The following quotations from the introduction and preface indicate the scope of this very useful work by Prof. Peterson. The beetle section is on pages 2-218 and includes keys, illustrations and descriptions as well as a bibliography, a glossary, and a list of family names of Coleoptera. Introduction: "This volume is a continuation of Part I and concludes the first edition of Larvae of Insects. It presents larvae of Coleoptera, [etc.]. The Coleoptera and Diptera are treated in a manner similar to the portions of Part I which consider the more common, important and unusual species of Lepidoptera and plant infesting Hymenoptera. . ." Preface to part II: "Part I made its appearance in December 1948. At that time it was stated that Part II would not be ready for publication for several years. To date the author has figured and described most representatives of practically all families of all the orders which he has been able to obtain. Eventually after more extensive collections of larvae have been assembled, especially many species of economic importance, the author hopes to add these and others in future revisions or supplements."

R.H.A.